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Assistant to the Director

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(The following remarks by William E. Colby are prepared for delivery before the 71st Anniversary Dinner of the New York Council of The Navy League of the United States scheduled to convene at 6:00 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, October 20, 1975, at the Grand Ballroom of the New York Hilton. Mr. Colby will begin speaking at about 9:00 P.M.)

Remarks

by

W. E. Colby

Director of Central Intelligence

before

New York Council,

Navy League of the United States

October 20, 1975

Secretary Middendorf, Admiral Moorer, Admiral Anderson, Mr. Shepley, Admiral Bergen, Mr. Mulcahy, ladies and gentlemen.

Not a person in this room doubts the need for a strong United States Navy.

Not a person in this room doubts the need for a strong United States intelligence service.

I am here to tell you we have both--and both are the best in the world. You do not need to be told about the excellence of the U. S. Navy. I would like to tell you about the excellence of our intelligence service. Its technical geniuses, its dedicated clandestine operators, its objective analysts have brought whole new dimensions in precision, in scope, and in forward projections to American intelligence.

Years ago we looked to intelligence to tell us where an enemy fleet was. Today, we know not only where it is, but what it can do. And we know more--we know what kind of fleet to expect in the future. We have followed the progress of the new Russian carrier presently on sea trials since its keel was laid five years ago. We will not be startled by its appearance as part of the operational fleet as we might have been in years past.

But will we destroy this great intelligence capability? Will we have an investigation in 1980 as to why in 1975 we deprived our nation of its technical and foreign sources that provide information about the threats we will face in the years ahead.

Those threats are there:

- in the ballistic missiles cocked and aimed at us;
- in the nuclear weapons which can fall into the hands of reckless despots or paranoiac terrorists;
- in the desperate and authoritarian reactions of poor and overpopulated nations to the increasing gap they see between themselves and the affluence of the developed world;
- and in the temptation of some nations to look to racist or radical rather than democratic and moderate formulas for a better life.

Good intelligence can warn us of these problems. It is not a crystal ball or an advance edition of the World Almanac of 1977. But it can identify coming problems and permit our national leaders to face them, informed and warned of the forces and factors involved.

Most important, with good intelligence we can not only defend against or deter such threats, we can negotiate them away or resolve them before they become critical.

But is our intelligence to become mere theater? Will it be exposed in successive sensational re-runs for the amusement, or even amazement, of our people rather than being preserved and protected for the benefit of us all?

Will we have publicity or protection? Will we have sensation or safety?

Our intelligence missteps and misdeeds are indeed small in number and in substance. Against the service our intelligence has rendered the nation over the past 28 years, they are truly few and far between.

But when an operation that involved three agents is proclaimed as "massive;" when the normal detail of CIA employees to other Government agencies is called "infiltration;" when an Army vulnerability study of the New York subway is ascribed to CIA plotting because one of our officers read the report; or when conspiracy theorists mouth CIA complicity in the assassination of President Kennedy despite flat denials, then the American people are understandably troubled. They can wonder whether their intelligence service is more a peril than a protector.

We are about to have our fifth rerun of the great mail-reading story. It first appeared in my testimony before CIA's oversight committees last January and February. I said we had reviewed and terminated this activity in 1973. Its second playing was in the Rockefeller Commission report. This was followed by a TV spectacular featuring Representative Abzug's indignation. The Post Office and Civil Service Committee of the House of Representatives then reviewed it. And this week, the Senate Select Committee will repeat the performance in greater detail on live TV.

I hope our citizens will derive the real message of this mail-reading affair:

- that intelligence looked at mail to and from Communist countries during the threatening days of the Cold War;
- that intelligence reviewed the activity and determined that it was improper in 1973;
- that intelligence in 1973 set out clear directives that any activities not in full compliance with the laws of the United States would stop;
- and that intelligence itself reported this matter to the bodies now investigating it.

I hope our citizens will not be misled into perceiving intelligence as a menace to our nation. I hope rather that they will see its important role as an essential--and effective--protector of our safety and democracy against the threats in the real world outside our borders.

Intelligence is not theater. It is a serious--a deadly serious business. The dedicated men and women of CIA, who serve their country in an anonymous and demanding craft, must not be made national scapegoats for the revision of our national values and consensus of the past 20 years.

We do not oppose investigation. We welcome it. But investigation must be responsible, as intelligence must be responsible.

No one in this room thinks that there should be public revelation of the Navy's war plans. The American people don't think so either. Neither do they think there should be a public revelation of the names of people who serve American intelligence in confidential, and often risky, dealings. We Americans, and we intelligence professionals, are not going to let this happen.

But damage has already been done by irresponsible exposure of true intelligence secrets. Intelligence high in the sky and deep in the ocean can be lost. Such exposures have concerned our foreign friends and caused some who wish to help us to think that the risk is too great.

Thus we Americans must call for full responsibility in our investigations of intelligence, as we do for intelligence itself. We must insist that intelligence not become theater, so that today's comedy does not become tomorrow's tragedy. We cannot stand blind and deaf in the world of the 1980s because we were hypnotized by our review of the 1950s and 60s.

Everyone in this room knows America has the best Navy in the world. We all want to keep it that way.

I want you to know that America also has the best intelligence service in the world. We must keep it that way.